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The Canadian Indian



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The Canadian Indian

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At the time of the first European settlements in North America, the Indian population of what is now Canada was, according to the best estimate of anthropologists, about 200,000. Shortly after the arrival of Europeans, the Indian population started to decline until it became a common belief that the Indians were a dying race. After dwindling for almost half a century, their numbers began to grow again, until today there is a total Indian population of more than 288,938.

There are 568 Indian communities, or "bands", in Canada. With the exception of certain nomadic groups inhabiting the outlying northern regions, these bands are located on 2,196 "reserves", varying in size from a few acres to more than 500 square miles, set aside by the Canadian Government for the use and benefit of Indians. About 30 per cent of the total Indian population have chosen to live off reserves as members of the general community. Successful farmers, ranchers, lumbermen, doctors, dentists, lawyers, teachers, nurses, clergymen, soldiers, industrial workers, stenographers, mechanics, salesmen and tradesmen are numbered in the Indian work force—both on and off reserves.

Although the origin of the Indians remains uncertain, anthropologists believe that they came to America in successive migrations in prehistoric times from Northern Asia, probably by way of the Bering Strait.

The Indians are not a single people. They are divided into ten basic linguistic groups, which are, in turn, subdivided into tribes with their own dialects. Four linguistic groups are found east of the Rocky Mountains—Algonkian, Athapaskan, Iroquoian and Siouan—and six in British Columbia—Kootenayan, Salishan, Wakashan, Tsimshian, Haida and Tlinkit. Some Athapaskan-speaking Indian bands also live in the interior of British Columbia.

Indians of Algonkian origin are the most numerous, occupying an area from the Atlantic Ocean to the Rockies; they include such well-known tribes as the Micmacs of Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, the Montagnais of Quebec, and the Ojibway, Cree and Blackfoot of Ontario and the Prairie Provinces.

Iroquoian peoples, including the Hurons, are found in Ontario and Quebec, Athapaskans inhabit the Yukon and Northwest Territories, while Siouan tribes inhabit parts of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

The Indian population of Canada is widely scattered, with a variety of cultural backgrounds. It exhibits various stages of economic and social development, from that of the primitive nomadic hunter to that of the highly-skilled industrial worker or member of the learned professions. Like every other community in Canada, the Indian band or group is subject to the economic, social and geographical influences of the region in which it lives. For general purposes the Indian population may be grouped according to the natural economic zones of the country:

Atlantic seaboard

On the Atlantic seaboard, the various tribes lived originally by hunting and had no agriculture. Today, however, they are mainly engaged in forestry, agriculture, fishing and native handicrafts, and live much the same life as other Canadians making their homes in the Atlantic Provinces.

St Lawrence basin, south of the Laurentian plateau

At the time of European settlement, the St Lawrence and Great Lakes regions that became the nuclei of the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec were inhabited, as they are now, by two main groups of Indians: Iroquoians, including Hurons, and Algonkians, including

Ojibways, Algonkins and Abenakis. The Iroquoians were farmers, the only aboriginal race in Canada that had developed agriculture to any great extent before the coming of the Europeans; the Algonkians depended mainly on hunting for their livelihood. Today, those in the settled areas are engaged mainly in farming, industry and the professions, while those in the more remote areas rely mostly on forestry, fishing, hunting and trapping for a living.

The Prairies

In the Prairie Provinces the Indians, who depended upon the buffalo for practically all their needs, had to adapt to new conditions following its near extinction. Many are now successful ranchers and grain-growers, a remarkable transition in the space of a few generations, in view of the fact that no previous agricultural experience was available to guide them.

Pacific region

The Indians inhabiting the coastal areas of this region were formerly seagoers and fishermen; today they are active in commercial fishing, as well as in logging and other industries peculiar to the region. In the interior, fruit-growing and ranching are important, while many Indians earn their livelihood in lumbering. In the

northern areas, trapping is the principal occupation.

Precambrian Shield

The Indians in this vast region were formerly entirely dependent on hunting and fishing for their food, enjoying periods of plenty in good game years and suffering privation and famine when game was scarce. Although hunting remains important, modern means of transportation and communication have wrought a remarkable change in the native economy of the region. The pulpwood industry in the more accessible areas provides employment for many Indians, while mining and other operations are also changing employment patterns.

Indian affairs in New France

The lure of furs and wealth brought French settlers and fur traders to Canada in 1604, more than 60 years after Jacques Cartier had travelled down the St Lawrence befriending the Indian people. To ensure an abundance of these furs, the French soon established good relations with Algonkin tribes in the east and Huron tribes in the west while setting up trading-posts and mission stations. This firm alliance was to last until the fall of French power in Canada.

The Algonkins and the Hurons were the traditional foes of the

Iroquois, their enmity manifesting itself mainly in a keen rivalry over control of the fur trade. The Hurons wanted the sole rights to furs from the interior for trading with the French, while the Iroquois wanted them to trade to their English allies.

When New England colonists and traders clashed with their French counterparts, the Indians were drawn into the struggle as allies of either English or French, and soon became an integral part of both fighting forces. From the Indian point of view, they were not only fighting for trade rights but also settling old scores with enemy tribes.

The capture of Montreal by English forces in 1760 meant that France's Indian allies began reluctantly to accept English rule by agreement and by treaty.

Administration under the British

As early as 1670, during the reign of Charles II, instructions were given to the governors of the British colonies that Indians who desired to place themselves under British protection were to be well received and protected. Later it was found necessary to establish an office devoted solely to the administration of Indian affairs. In 1755, Sir William Johnson was appointed Indian Superintendent, with head-

quarters in the Mohawk Valley, in what is now the State of New York. The establishment of this office was the genesis of future Indian administrative organization in North America. Following the American Revolution, the Indian office was moved to Canada. Since that time, a continuing administrative organization has been maintained for the protection and advancement of Indian interests.

Until 1860, the Imperial Government was responsible for the management and financing of Indian affairs in Ontario and Quebec; in that year however, it was decided that the Province of Canada should assume the responsibility. Accordingly, Indian affairs were brought under the control of the Crown Lands Department, the Commissioner of Crown Lands being appointed Chief Superintendent of Indian Affairs. In other parts of the country, existing Indian-affairs administration was under the management of the various provincial or colonial jurisdictions.

By a special provision in the British North America Act of 1867, the administration of Indian affairs came under the jurisdiction of the Government of Canada and was made the responsibility of the Department of the Secretary of State. In 1873, it became the responsibility of a branch of the Department of the Interior. In 1880,

a separate Department of Indian Affairs was established, which existed until 1936, when Indian affairs were again assigned to a branch, this time of the Department of Mines and Resources. From January 1950, Indian Affairs was a branch of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration; in January 1966, it became a part of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

A primary function of the present Department of Indian and Northern Affairs is to help the Indian people to participate fully in the social and economic life of Canada. To this end, the Department has brought into effect a broad range of programs in the fields of education, economic development, social welfare and community development—including housing and road construction, maintenance, sanitation facilities, child and adult education, band business enterprises on reserves and so on.

Among the more important functions of the Indian Affairs Branch are the administration of Indian reserves and surrendered land, the administration of band funds, descent of property, and treaty obligations.

Administration is carried on through a headquarters in Ottawa and regional and district offices in each province or territory. Medical services are provided as required

by the Department of National Health and Welfare.

Indian treaties

Early in the settlement of North America, the British recognized, as a matter of policy, an Indian interest in the lands the tribes occupied—which could be relinquished only by agreement with the Indians, and then only to the Crown. This gave rise to the practice of making agreements or treaties, as they were afterwards called, with various Indian tribes. The policy began in British colonial times in what is now the United States and was afterwards introduced into Canada.

As settlement began in what later became southern Ontario, treaties were made with the Indians for the surrender of their interests in the land. In return, the Crown undertook to set aside reserves and provide additional benefits such as cash payments, annuities, educational facilities and other considerations.

After Confederation in 1867, Canada followed the policy, with regard to Indians with whom no settlement had been arrived at, of making treaties, first in Manitoba and northwestern Ontario, next in the greater part of the West and Northwest, and finally throughout all of northern Ontario. In British Columbia, the provincial government did not recognize that Indians

had any title and considered the land question settled with the setting aside of reserves. However, in 1926 a special committee of the Senate and House of Commons recommended that, in lieu of treaty moneys payable in other areas, a sum of \$100,000 be expended annually for the benefit of B.C. Indians who had not been brought under treaty. (Because of their peculiar geographical position and close relation with Alberta Indians, the Indians of northeastern British Columbia had been brought under Treaty No 8 between 1899 and 1910 notwithstanding the position taken by the province with respect to Indian title.)

About half the Indian population of Canada is under treaty. This does not include the Indians of Quebec and the Maritimes, whose territorial claims had passed to the French. The British did, however, guarantee to these Indians all lands that French authorities had set aside for their use. Also not included in the treaties are the Iroquois of Brantford and Tyendinaga and certain other groups that came to Canada from what is now the United States and were given reserve lands. The needs of Indians not under treaty, however, receive no less attention from the Federal Government on that account.

Legislation

The administration of Indian affairs in Canada is based on the Indian Act. Passed in 1876, this legislation was amended several times, though it remained the basic Indian law until 1951, when a new Indian Act came into force. In 1969 the Government tabled a White Paper with a view to amending this act, but its recommendations were rejected by the Canadian Indian associations and the project was shelved. A subsidy was granted to the National Indian Brotherhood to make a detailed study of the question and to present the Indians' own recommendations on how the act should be amended. The Federal Government agreed not to make any changes in the act before the Indian associations had made their recommendations.

Legal status of Indians

Indians are Canadian citizens, and as such they are protected by the law in the same manner as other Canadian citizens. They are also subject to federal, provincial and municipal legislation.

Certain special provisions were made in the Indian Act concerning land located on the reserves; the real estate and personal property that Indians own on a reserve are exempt from taxation and, except

on a suit by another Indian from the same band, are also exempt from seizure.

Indians may vote in federal, provincial and municipal elections on the same basis as other Canadians.

Under the Indian Act, each band elects its council either according to tradition or in the manner established by the legislation. The council exercises powers similar to those of a municipality and can make by-laws to answer the needs of the band.

Local government

The conception of local government has been deeply rooted in the traditions of the Indian people for a long time and is recognized in the Indian Act. The Local Government Program promotes and encourages local control of and responsibility for the programs and services provided for Indians.

The band council is recognized as a distinct governmental body responsible to its constituency. A basic financing fund has been established with the express purpose of strengthening the representative role of the band councils and their leadership. This fund enables chiefs and councillors to set up band offices, hire full-time or part-time staff and pay members of the band council honoraria or travelling expenses.

The band councils have taken over a number of responsibilities, particularly with regard to housing, education, community planning, the administration of welfare programs and policing. Many bands manage all their programs, while others manage a certain number or share the responsibility with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. The bands must demonstrate knowledge of and experience in management, and a desire to participate.

Both band councils and individuals can take advantage of training and development courses in business management and other subjects. They also have the opportunity of working in various federal departments under a special recruitment and development program through which they will gain practical management experience.

The main aim of the Local Government Program is to prepare the Indians themselves to take control of and responsibility for programs intended for them. This purpose is in keeping with the Indian people's desire to recover their traditional right to control their own affairs.

Finances

The Indian Trust Fund is made up of capitalized annuities and moneys derived from Indian assets.

Revenue to the fund began with the settlement of Upper Canada

and the surrender for sale of Indian lands in that province. Today, major items of income to the fund are lands, timber sales, oil royalties, the leasing of oil and gas exploration rights and the sale of gravel.

Before 1859, moneys were held for investment in commercial securities, municipal debentures and so on. In that year, the Federal Government assumed responsibility for the investments because investments in securities and debentures involved possible loss to the fund and security was of prime importance.

It should be noted that the Indian Trust Fund is not owned in common by all Indians in Canada but belongs to various bands. Some bands have well over \$1 million, others have only a few hundred, while a considerable number of bands have no moneys at all and therefore no interest in the fund. This seeming inequity arises from the fact that some bands chose reserves rich in agricultural land, timber or minerals, and have been able to dispose of their surplus assets, depositing the proceeds in their trust accounts. Other bands chose reserves because of their suitability for hunting and fishing, and these often lacked other resources from which revenue could be derived.

Expenditures from the moneys of a band held in the Trust Fund are

permitted for any purpose considered in the interest of the band or its individual members. Requests for expenditures originate with the councils of the respective bands.

Under the Indian Act, a band may be permitted by Order in Council to control, manage and expend its revenue in whole or in part. To date, 335 bands have been granted this authority. However, whether or not such authority has been granted to their bands, all band councils are encouraged to take the lead in planning for the expenditure of band funds.

When an Indian is enfranchised—that is, when he gives up his Indian status and is no longer entitled to the rights and privileges reserved under the Indian Act for Indians only—he is paid a *per capita* share of the trust fund of the band to which he belongs.

Education

In Canada, education is generally under the jurisdiction of the individual provinces, but the provision of education services to Indians is the responsibility of the Federal Government.

The “in-school” education program from pre-school to secondary grades is carried out through the operation of federal schools, or by agreements with provincial schools, in which case the tuition costs are paid by the Federal Government.

The schools follow provincial curricula, but are encouraged to provide special instructional materials and programs related to the Indian heritage and culture. Student residences, boarding homes and counselling services are provided for students who are prevented from attending schools in their home areas because of isolation or for other reasons.

The Federal Government also provides a comprehensive post-school program of financial assistance and counselling services, including vocational, occupational and post-secondary training in provincial institutions and universities. In addition, adult-education courses are available to provide Indian adults with basic education, educational upgrading and retraining. An employment and relocation program offers on-the-job and in-service training services, relocation grants, counselling and follow-up services and mobility assistance.

Teachers

Indian boys and girls are encouraged, through financial assistance, to enter the teaching profession to serve their own people. Teachers engaged by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs enjoy a salary schedule that compares favourably with those in effect in the provincial schools across Canada. When engaged in

the Indian day-schools in isolated regions, most teachers receive furnished and heated quarters for which a moderate pay deduction is made.

Social services

There is no specific federal legislation whereby the Federal Government is authorized to establish or maintain a social-assistance program on behalf of Indian residents of Canada.

The authority for providing these programs is an allotment included in the funds appropriated each year by Parliament for the administration of Indian affairs. The appropriation for welfare purposes provides for financial assistance and services to: indigent registered Indians living on reserves; specific categories of non-Indians living on reserves; indigent registered Indians living off reserves who are not considered to be eligible for assistance from any source in the non-Indian communities in which they may be living.

The social-services program administered and financed by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs includes social assistance, care and maintenance of children and rehabilitative services for physically- or socially-handicapped adults. It provides the basic necessities of food, clothing, shelter, fuel and other household essentials for

dependent Indians living on reserves, under the same conditions as apply to other residents of the provinces and Yukon Territory. In the Northwest Territories, welfare benefits and services to Indian residents are the administrative responsibility of the territorial government.

Under Section 88 of the Indian Act, Indian residents of a province are subject to the same provincial child-welfare legislation as non-Indian residents. The welfare of neglected, dependent and delinquent Indian children is ensured through the enforcement of provincial legislation and provision of related services by provincial social-welfare departments and accredited child-care agencies in each province. The Federal Government has entered into agreements with the governments of the Yukon, Manitoba and Nova Scotia by which Indian children may receive the same welfare services as non-Indian children, in accordance with provincial child-welfare legislation.

The Federal Government provides maintenance and care in homes for the aged and other institutions for physically- and socially-handicapped adults who need care but may not require active medical treatment.

Federal agreements with provincial governments and private organizations

In addition to the child-welfare agreements, the Federal Government entered into an agreement with Ontario in 1965 under which all provincial welfare programs are made available to Indians living in the province.

Under service contracts, private social agencies in Quebec provide professional social services to Indian communities within the province.

Indians are eligible for family and youth allowances, Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement, which are administered and financed by the Federal Government. Certain provincial allowances in British Columbia, Ontario and Nova Scotia are also available to Indian residents.

Social development

The Department defines social-development services as services intended to encourage and help the Indian people to participate in improving the social, economic and cultural conditions of their community life. These services are provided by the Indian associations under agreements with the Federal Government. These organizations hire social workers who meet with community residents, initially on an

individual basis and later in small groups, to help them determine what local problems they need to solve and to advise them on an appropriate course of action. The object of this program is not so much to solve the specific problem chosen by the community as to use that problem as an opportunity for residents to learn, through experience, the skills involved in working together to resolve a particular problem.

The development of leadership is encouraged by the Federal Government in co-operation with the provincial governments and certain Canadian universities. An increased demand for responsible leadership for Indian councils, voluntary organizations and other groups in Indian communities has resulted in a marked expansion in training courses, workshops and short courses related to local needs.

Economic development

Because of the rapid changes taking place in Canadian society, more and more Indians are leaving hunting, fishing and trapping as a means of making a livelihood and turning to the business world.

This does not, of course, mean that the traditional pursuits have disappeared. New programs are constantly being developed with the purpose of increasing the income of those Indians who

remain attached to the traditional way of life, in touch with nature and the environment. An increasing number of Indian bands and individuals are active in the fields of tourism and open-air recreation. Fishing operations are, of necessity, being modernized, so as to be able to compete commercially, and fishermen have formed numerous co-operatives. The number of agricultural co-operatives has also increased somewhat, particularly for gathering wild rice.

The traditional arts and crafts are still an important source of revenue. Art and craft items made by Indians are sold commercially, which provides an important supplementary income for those producing them. A number of new, non-traditional products have been developed from traditional models and designs.

Recognizing the need to establish long-term economic aims for, and in consultation with, the Indian people, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, through its Indian-Eskimo Economic Development Branch, helps individuals and bands by creating business and employment opportunities in secondary and service industries, as well as by encouraging, in certain regions, resource-utilization and land-development, including the development of mineral resources on Indian reserves.

Many of these programs are conducted in co-operation with other federal departments, provincial governments and private organizations.

Assistance is in the form of loans, grants, loan guarantees, technical and management advice and specialized training. The loans, grants and guarantees are provided from the Indian Economic Development Fund.

The branch provides assistance in carrying out economic-development projects by supplying the Indians with a basic infrastructure and professional and technical services.

The branch is also responsible for the administration of Indian reserves and surrendered lands, as well as the administration of certain categories of Indian estates.

General

The medical care of Indians and Eskimos is within the jurisdiction of Medical Services, Department of National Health and Welfare. The National Museum of Man is the federal authority on traditional Indian culture and prehistory. Information on these matters may be obtained from the Education Section of the Museum.

General information on Canada's native peoples can be obtained from the Public Communications and Parliamentary Relations

Branch, Indian and Inuit Affairs, Ottawa. Films and film strips may be obtained from the National Film Board, Ottawa.

Future of the Indians

A welcome trend during the past few years has been an ever-increasing awareness on the part of the Indian people that their future lies largely within their own control. As a concrete illustration of this fact, more and more Indian bands have chosen to manage for themselves the funds earmarked for providing services to their members. This trend can be expected to continue and grow in the future, and will oblige the Federal Government and the Indians themselves to co-operate in developing policies and programs to strengthen the native sense of individuality, without, however, weakening the traditional sense of community.

Some people will see in the trend towards local government by the Indian bands an attempt to create a separate, parallel society. This fear must be dispelled, for the Indians' real object is to become full and equal members of Canadian society as a whole.

This aim will be achieved only if the Indians develop confidence and learn to manage their own community affairs in ways that are familiar to them, which they themselves can gradually modify until they achieve full equality with their fellow citizens.

In a comparatively short time, Indian associations have been formed in every province and territory of Canada. These associations are trying to find the most effective ways to help their people, and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs is listening carefully to their opinions.



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